

OCTOBER 26, 1976

ELECTION '76: WOMEN  
(TAPE INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

//EDITORS: THIS IS ANOTHER IN A SPECIAL SERIES OF REPORTS ON THE AMERICAN ELECTION CAMPAIGN AS SEEN FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A PARTICULAR VOTER GROUP OR RELIGION.//

ANNCR:

IN THIS LATEST OF A SERIES OF REPORTS ON HOW PARTICULAR VOTER GROUPS IN THE UNITED STATES VIEW THE NATIONAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN, LINDA CASHDAN TAKES A LOOK AT THE ROLE OF WOMEN ON THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SCENE.... THE FEMINIST FACTOR IN ELECTION '76:

VOICE:

NINETEEN-SEVENTY-FOUR WAS THE YEAR ELLA GRASSO BECAME THE FIRST WOMAN EVER ELECTED GOVERNOR IN HER OWN RIGHT. NINETEEN-SEVENTY-FIVE SAW THE ELECTION OF THE FIRST FEMALE MAYOR OF ONE OF AMERICA'S LARGEST CITIES. NINETEEN-SEVENTY-SIX MAY BE THE FIRST ELECTION IN SEVERAL YEARS IN WHICH THERE ARE NO "FIRST" -- NO NEW BREAKTHROUGHS FOR WOMEN IN AMERICAN POLITICS. THAT IS NOT NECESSARILY A BAD SIGN.

TAPE: CUT ONE -- WECHSLER:

"NOW WE MAY SEE THE ELECTION OF TWO MORE WOMEN GOVERNORS THIS YEAR.."

VOICE:

FREDRICA WECHSLER, POLITICAL COORDINATOR FOR THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S POLITICAL CAUCUS...

TAPE: CUT TWO -- WECHSLER:

"THERE ARE TWO WOMEN RUNNING FOR GOVERNOR WHO ARE GIVEN A GOOD CHANCE OF BEING ELECTED, ONE IN VERMONT, AND THE OTHER IN THE STATE OF WASHINGTON. SO THAT WE MAY INCREASE THE NUMBER OF WOMEN GOVERNORS. WE WILL, I HOPE SEE AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF CONGRESSWOMEN, AND DEFINITELY IN THE NUMBER OF WOMEN STATE LEGISLATORS."

VOICE:

THIS MAY BE A YEAR OF IMPORTANT SECONDS, THIRDS, AND FOURTHS, FREDRICA WECHSLER SAYS, A YEAR WHEN WOMEN FOLLOW THE FOOTSTEPS OF THOSE WHO MADE HISTORY IN THE PAST. A YEAR OF "MORES" -- MORE WOMEN ELECTED OFFICIALS, MORE WOMEN IN MORE PROMINENT CAMPAIGN POSITIONS, AND MORE WOMEN ENTERING AMERICAN POLITICS TOO:

TAPE: CUT THREE -- WECHSLER:

"AT THE LOCAL LEVEL WE SEE MANY MORE WOMEN, IN CITY COUNCIL RACES, IN COUNTY RACES FOR SCHOOL BOARDS, RACES OF THIS SORT, SO THAT I HOPE THAT THESE WOMEN WILL USE THOSE LOWER ECHELON OFFICES AS TRAINING GROUNDS AND THEN IN 1978, 1980, 1982 WE WILL SEE THEM RUNNING FOR STATE LEGISLATURE, FOR CONGRESS, AND FOR THE UNITED STATES SENATE."

VOICE:

THE REAL FOCAL POINT OF THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S POLITICAL CAUCUS IN ELECTION '76 IS AN ISSUE, NOT A CANDIDATE. SPECIFICALLY, THE EQUAL RIGHTS (FOR WOMEN) AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION WHICH MUST BE RATIFIED BY FOUR MORE STATE LEGISLATURES BEFORE IT CAN BECOME LAW. THE DEADLINE FOR RATIFICATION IS MARCH 1979, STILL MORE THAN TWO YEARS OFF. BUT FREDRICA WECHSLER SAYS THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S POLITICAL CAUCUS HAS BECOME CONCERNED BECAUSE THE PACE OF STATE RATIFICATIONS HAS COME TO A COMPLETE STANDSTILL.

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- WECHSLER:

"IT WAS DECIDED THIS YEAR THAT THE WAY TO ATTACK THE ISSUE WAS TO CHANGE SOME OF THOSE VOTES IN THE STATE LEGISLATURES AND THAT MEANS ELECTING PRO-EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT (ERA) PEOPLE IN THE PLACE OF AN ANTI (ERA PEOPLE) WHO ARE NOW INCUMBENTS. AND WE HAVE HAD SOME SUCCESS WITH THIS TECHNIQUE IN THE PRIMARIES, AND WE WILL BE LOOKING VERY CAREFULLY AT THOSE SELECTED STATE LEGISLATURES -- ILLINOIS, INDIANA, ARIZONA, NEVADA, OKLAHOMA, NORTH CAROLINA, AND MISSOURI."

VOICE:

IN THE FIVE YEARS SINCE THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S POLITICAL CAUCUS WAS FOUNDED, IT MEMBERSHIP HAS GROWN FROM FIFTY TO THREE HUNDRED THOUSAND. IT HAS NOT ONLY GROWN, IT HAS MATURED

VOICE: (CONT'D)

TOO, INTO A POLITICALLY SHREWD NATIONAL NETWORK, THE RECOGNIZED POLITICAL ARM OF THE AMERICAN WOMEN'S MOVEMENT. AND SOME OF ITS NINETEEN SEVENTY-SIX ELECTION CAMPAIGN VICTORIES HAVE ALREADY BEEN RECORDED. BOTH THE DEMOCRATIC AND THE REPUBLICAN PLATFORM COMMITTEES HAD SPECIAL TASK FORCES ON WOMEN'S ISSUES. BOTH CONVENTIONS HAD WOMEN AS KEYNOTE SPEAKERS. BOTH PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS HAVE WOMEN AS CO-CAMPAIGN DIRECTORS. NEITHER, FREDRICA WECHSLER ADMITS, HAS ENJOYED THE POWER OR THE PUBLICITY AFFORDED THE MALE CAMPAIGN DIRECTORS. BUT THE FACT REMAINS, EACH PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE REALIZED THIS YEAR THAT IT WAS ESSENTIAL TO INCLUDE HIGH RANKING WOMEN ON HIS STAFF. AS FIGUREHEADS? "NO," SAYS MS. WECHSLER, "I PREFER TO THINK OF THEM AS BEACHHEADS."

THE GAINS WOMEN HAVE MADE OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS REMAIN. THERE IS NO GOING BACK. THE QUESTION -- FOR FREDRICA WECHSLER AND THE OTHER LEADERS AT THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S POLITICAL CAUCUS -- IS: HOW FAST ARE WOMEN MOVING FORWARD IN THE POLITICAL SPHERE? THAT ANSWER WILL COME ON ELECTION NIGHT.

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JS/RTD